2nd ~~First~~ Lord
2nd ~~First~~ Captain

B.P.

SAMSON

Music: Prelude. It backs the first three verses.

DELILAH. Lift the curtain.

See: the moon is on the face he wears at night.

He smiles like a thumb-sucking babe
And turns a half-turn in his love-crib.
Sleep is good news to bone and sinew,
Therefore to Samson, who is bone and sinew;
Therefore he smiles.

Sleep, Samson, sleep your gifted sleep,
Each plodding breath a bellows to the forge.
This deep indwelling strength
Is not a thing of body juices or of bloodsprings
But of raw hair, lank hair, lank common hair
Bewitched by some black god of Israel.

Where is the man in all Philistia
Can undo such a might and/main?
A thousand Philistines lie broken in the clay at
Lehi,
Dead of Samson's mettle--
And still he lives among them; still unconquered.
However, what cannot be conquered can be
coaxed:
The cobra may be sung to sleep,
The leopard fanned and petted.
Whatever furies armor cannot fend
Softness will soon enough devour.

I will awaken Samson to a riddle:
What is it that is lighter than a dust mote to
the touch,

Yet crushing as disaster?
The answer: Any moment of the day
The feather strokes of time,
The soft-faced little seconds,
They hammer down the mighty
And stoop mountains under
And trample out the fires of the fiercest stars.

This much a woman knows of stratagem:
The unsheathed breast is keener than the naked
sword,
The--

Music: Far-off note of a flute.

DELILAH: There is the signal! They have come! The lords are here.

Music: More flute.

DELILAH: Less signaling, or you are piping your own funeral!

Light footsteps; lightly creaking door.

FIRST LORD: Is he asleep, Delilah?

DELILAH: (whispering): Yes. Come quietly! How many are you?

FIRST LORD: Seven.

DELILAH: You brought the razor?

FIRST LORD: Yes

DELILAH: The money also?

FIRST LORD: Each of us eleven hundred silver pieces.

DELILAH: But where?

FIRST LORD: Outside.

Delilah: Then bring it in.

2nd Lord
Warm! Effeminate! Indo life Bored at times

SECOND LORD: What--now?

FIRST LORD: You do not trust us?

THIRD LORD: You do not trust the seven highest lords of all the land?

DELILAH: Yes, yes, of course I trust you...But cautiously. Remark how Samson trusts in me.

FIRST LORD: Very well; bring in the money.

SECOND LORD: Bring it in.

THIRD LORD: What if Samson wakens and discovers we're conspirators?

DELILAH: Your wives will waken and discover they are widows.

FIRST LORD. Who will shave Samson's head?

DELILAH: The lighest-fingered of you.

SECOND LORD: Of us?

DELILAH: Who else then? I?

My bargain was to hound my lover's genius to its lair,

But not to beard him.

That is up to you, brave lords.

FIRST LORD (Returning). Here is the silver.

DELILAH: Put it over there. (Pause.)

Well, come now, who will shear my lion? (No answer.)

What, none of you?

The seven highest lords of the land, and all at sea? (Another pause.)

THIRD LORD: I will shave Samson.

SECOND LORD. You?

THIRD LORD (Hopefully). It will make me worthy in the eyes of the god Dagon.

FIRST LORD: But be careful. One slip--

SECOND LORD: I wish I had a drink to prop me.

FIRST LORD: Yes, so do I.

DELILAH: Brave lords, the lot of you!

The image of Courage is drawn male--bearded, muscled, defiant, posturing, legs astride of serpents.

This is all wrong.

Mark him here a blowsy loiterer

Bribed by a pot of wine

To stand and hold your quaking hand.

SAMSON (suddenly, from well off mike, calling almost as though agonized). Delilah! (Then more calmly, as though stirring from a nightmare.) Delilah--where are you?

THE LORDS. (General low ad libs of consternation, over Samson's awakening.)

Music: Tension cue sneaks in here softly under:

FIRST LORD: Quick! Let us get away!

SECOND LORD. He has awakened!

OTHER LORDS: (Continue ad lib.)

DELILAH (to the lords, whispering).

Be quiet; do not move:

I'll go in to him.

(Up.) I am here, Samson.

(Again low.) When you hear me hum to him

It will be safe for you to come into the chamber.

Not before.

Music: Fade under:

Light footsteps.

SAMSON: (fading in as we follow Delilah's approaching perspective).

Why did you leave me?

DELILAH: I got up to watch the full moon wester.

Never has the valley been so drugged and scented and serene.

SAMSON: Don't leave me in the night, Delilah.

While you were gone I staggered sick and sweating in a dream whose shape already fades;

I reached my arms out to you as if to save myself from drowning in a sea of fanged eels,

But you were nowhere.

Then I cried your name....

DELILAH (caressingly).

There, there, my poor beleaguered boy.

There, there.

A kiss for Samson's brow:

Now hold me softly in the arms that terrify the world.

SAMSON: Delilah!

DELILAH: Never will you be alone again on your love-bed,

Dear mighty man, so unafraid to stand alone against a thousand enemy.

I will watch over you and intercept all shadows.

SAMSON: No terrors stalk the earth so leprous and invincible with evil

As the undredged demons of our dreams.

DELILAH: Give over now, rest now.

Lie easy in my arms:

Here, pillow your head against my knees

And sleep, my strongheart,

Sleep, beloved,

Sleep, sleep, my hero, sleep.

SAMSON (sighs).

The wars are over, aren't they?

DELILAH: Yes, the wars are over.

SAMSON: Put by, as penitents put by their sins.

DELILAH: Put by, put by.

SAMSON: No more the bleeding bowel and the broken back.

DELILAH: No, no more.

SAMSON (sighs again; falling back to sleep now, he speaks softly).

Peace is a nice sentiment.

DELILAH: It is.

SAMSON: A burnished shield hung up forever on the wall.

DELILAH: Yes; and a fat fawn

Drowsing in a wolfproof meadow--

SAMSON: A wound sponged clean

And healing under balms.

DELILAH: Rest your head.

There, there.

Now go to sleep.

SAMSON (almost a sigh, as he tumbles off the brink of consciousness and into sleep). Delilah!

A moment of silence except for the sound of crickets and night noises.

DELILAH (softly). Samson? (no answer.) Samson? (She begins to hum. This continues for about fifteen seconds.)

FIRST LORD (whispering; afraid). We can't see you. Where are you, Delilah?

DELILAH: Sh!

SECOND LORD. The moon has set; we need a light.

DELILAH. Light your candles. I will shield his eyes.

THIRD LORD: I have the razor. I am ready.

DELILAH: Then begin. (Silence.)

THIRD LORD: One lock is shaven.

DELILAH. Six locks more.

THIRD LORD: Two...

DELILAH: Five more.

THIRD LORD: Three...

DELILAH: Four.

THIRD LORD: Four...

DELILAH: Hold off! He stirs. (She hums again for a few seconds.)

THIRD LORD: Five...six...

DELILAH: He bubbles at the mouth in some deep sudsy
slumber.
Just one lock more, and he is shorn for good.

THIRD LORD. Seven. Finished!

DELILAH: All but finished.
Now it commences.
First, clear away this fury-making hair,
So coiled and unattached.

FIRST LORD: Done.

DELILAH: Now make a wider light.

SECOND LORD: There. look, he's turning.

DELILAH: He is still asleep....Now, are you ready with your ropes?

THIRD LORD: Primed and waiting.

DELILAH: Stand back. I will awaken him.

Sounds of movement as the lords stand back.

DELILAH (up; in a clear voice). Samson! ...The Philistines are on you Samson!

SAMSON (sleepily). Hm? (Noticing the men around him.)

What is this? Who are these men, Delilah?

DELILAH: The Philistines are on you, Samson.

SAMSON: No, no, this is another dream.

FIRST LORD: Seize him, men!

SAMSON: Oho! So you would capture me! (Laughs.) I'll make tallow of your fat and bones!

CAST. (An altercation Bind his hands ad lib.)

SAMSON (at length). Where is my strength gone? This is surely but a stubborn nightmare!

FIRST LORD. He's down!....Now tie and truss him!

SAMSON: (in an agony of confusion). Delilah!

DELILAH. Your head, Samson.

SAMSON: My head?

DELILAH: Loose his hands and let him feel his scalp.

SAMSON: Shorn! Shorn of my secret and my strength!

DELILAH (blandly).

I sold your strength
For silver.

SAMSON. No. Let me shake my head
Till I am sensible again!
This is a tableau out of sleep!

And yet these sneering men resemble living
shapes
Of bristling lords whom I have seen
Strutting the streets of Gath and Ashkelon.
Indeed they stink the room <u>with their unmanly perfumes.</u>

Second Lord: Whether his baldness or his speech is uglier--

SAMSON: My eyes believe my enemies,

But my imagination groans
To see Delilah standing milk-white and fair
among them,
Stepped from the churns of morning into a
pit of night!
This is a counterfeit! This cannot be
Delilah!

DELILAH: It can, it can!

SAMSON: Sense does me treason!
This is a mare still feeding on the poisons
of my sleep!
My head needs to be shaken.

SECOND LORD: Then let the hand of a Philistine
Hasten to assist you.

A hard smash.

SECOND LORD: Ah, he is human and responsive too,
For see, he's bleeding where I hit him in
the mouth.
Now he begins to know how insult tastes.

SAMSON: I am awaken'd, then.
This is a conscious thing!
Betrayed and trapped and bound
With rope enough to tie the sun from
rising!

DELILAH: Now that you have taken Samson,
Take him and go.
This has been a sleepless night....

SAMSON: The first of many for you.
May your sleep be rotted to the core
forever!

Plagued and pursued across the face of
night
And cancerous with conscience--

DELILAH: Words are all the strength you have left
now.
Samson, you whom I have hated while I
loved,
You have been vanquished not by soldiers
thrashing in a mud,
But by a woman
Quietly, alert, unarmed, companionless,
Roused by no battle-cry--

SAMSON: But by silver.

DELILAH: Silver? Yes--properly:
Paid a conqueror.

SAMSON: Death is a greater conqueror than even
you, Delilah--
Also quiet and alert, unarmed and unaccompanied.
What tribute shall you pay the grave?
With what coin bribe the worm?

DELILAH: With flesh. It can be minted and it can be
forged
Into a hot and supple metal.
My body is the sword that cut you down.

SAMSON: Yes, and a two-faced sword it is,
Thrust into a sleeper for a sack of silver!

DELILAH: For Philistia!
You are my people's enemy
And you are mine
And you are captured like a common thief!

SAMSON: By a common whore!

DELILAH: All that remains to the vanquished,
Is a sneer at the victorious.

FIRST LORD (fulsomely). Yes, truthfully, Delilah is
our greatest army! We should drink to her!

SECOND LORD: A toast to victory!

SAMSON: What a sorry and degenerate victory!
O crass Philistia!
All war debauched and honor shamed
away!
Fly skirts for banners!
Lisp commands!
Ride beds to battle!
Flank with the thigh!

DELILAH: Listen, the eight of you:
I am the sex which fathers so deplore at
birth
And suffer to be reared.
"A girl is born," they say.
"Alas, a pity; luck and Dagon have deserted you;
A girl is born, fit only to attend the
wants of masters
And to sate their several hungers."
We are the weak ones,
The veiled ones,
We are the women,
The opinionless,
Consulted only by our lovers and our suckling babes.
Here is example of our uselessness:

This brutish Israelite
Who in a single brawl at Ashkelon killed
thirty men,
Who out of fury, when he was denied a
wife, burnt down the corn fields and
the vineyards in the time ofharvest;
This terrifying Samson, who, one rowdy
midnight,
Wrecked the city gates of Gaza, carried
them away upon his shoulders;
Who at Lehi slew a thousand of our fighting-men,
armed only with the jawbone of an ass--
This same appalling Samson lies disfranchised here
By one such weak and useless opinionless:
A girl child, much deplored at birth.

Consider it, my lords and masters!
Consider it, my fallen lover!
In the meantime, go.
Go; take him; take yourselves;
Remove.
The incident is ended.

Music: Delilah's harshness and bitterness are carried over into a passage which should give the feeling of conclusion to the foregoing scene; then there is the tension of anticipation of Samson's ordeal to come.

Effect of a high-class fight crowd, jeering Samson.

The noise comes down for:

1st Captain: We are ready to proceed.

2nd Captain: Samson, now we shall do to you as you have done to us.

SAMSON: Impossible. You cannot slay a thousand of me.

2nd Captain: No, but one can die a thousand deaths.

CAST: (Laughter fromthe crowds.)

THIRD CAPTAIN: Are you prepared, then, Samson?

SAMSON: For anything but justice.

FIRST CAPTAIN: Shall the strong man squeal when we begin?
Shall Samson cry for mercy?

SAMSON: You shall not have the pleasure.

SECOND CAPTAIN: Nor the pain.

CAST: (More laughter fromthe crowd.)

SAMSON:

I am far less a spectacle than you:
A hundred smirking lords set round
about a chained and bonded man
To do him torture.
These are the faces I have seen on
bratty boys
When plucking out the wings of flies.
The difference is you make occasion
Of your own disgrace.

FIRST CAPTAIN: Quiet, lest we root out your tongue!

SAMSON: Root out my tongue, and still my thoughts shall speak.

CAST: (Laughter.)

SAMSON:

It is the mark of little men to vaunt advantage
And to sport in the discomfiture of the defeated.
The lowest of low lusts is torment,
For it lies beneath the bottom instinct of
the savage animal.
Wolves are more dignified;
Snakes, by comparison, walk lofty;
Yea, the crawling crab has wings.

Now even the despised jackal guffaws
astride his kill.
But do proceed, Philistines,
There is merriment for such as you
In such as me.

FIRST CAPTAIN: Behold, my lords and lieges,
Here is lore of animals and of their instincts
Told to us by kind old Samson.
We are but schooling at his feet.
Observe and listen: You will learn the
tactics of the bee;
How ants are provident;
How bears deploy the winter;
How the supine chrysalis grows wings.

CAST. (Laughter of the crowd.)

FIRST CAPTAIN: Here is a second lesson, Samson:
The great and powerful among the animals
are short of sight;
The whale, who thrashes up a storm
with but a flicker of his tail,
Is squint-eyed;
And the elephant, whose legs are pillars
left behind from the construction of the earth,
Sees blurs beyond two lengths of its own self.
Hence, to adjust nature to its scale,
Your sight should be subtracted,
Since you are indeed a mighty animal.

CAST. (Laughter)

FIRST CAPTAIN: Less vision, therefore, for a holder of
outspoken views,

This seer among us,

This, our honored guest!

We will now subdivide his eyes.

SECOND CAPTAIN: What, leave him one eye?

FIRST CAPTAIN: Indeed not:

That would fracture all our delicate
arithmetic.

Two eyes are only twice one eye.

But one eye is a billion more than none.

CAST: (Laughter.)

FIRST CAPTAIN: I have it; we shall multiply.

SECOND CAPTAIN: Is this a riddle, now?

THIRD CAPTAIN: Samson is fond of riddles.

FIRST CAPTAIN: We shall multiply and not divide: two eyes times naught.

SECOND CAPTAIN: The sum is nothing.

FIRST CAPTAIN: Nothing it shall be.

SECOND CAPTAIN: Samson, have you ever seen a cipher close at hand?

SAMSON: Yes, I look now into vacancies of souls

Each yawning like the ultimate abyss of hell.

This place is filled with nothing in the shapes of men.

FIRST CAPTAIN: Remarkable, the penetration of his eyes....

Hand me the red-hot iron.

We will execute these scouts at once.

SECOND CAPTAIN: Here is the brand.

FIRST CAPTAIN: See how it glows, Samson.

With this dull light we shall extinguish light.

SECOND CAPTAIN: Let's see you stare it down.

SAMSON: I am prepared.

Come with your blazing irons.

THIRD CAPTAIN: What will you do for eyes tomorrow, Samson?

Have you thought of that?

SAMSON: The God of Israel shall be my eyes.

CAST: (Laughter.)

FIRST CAPTAIN: Ready,now.

Hold him, less he squirm inside his chains.

SECOND CAPTAIN: We are holding him.

Music: Effect of gouging; two chords of extreme dissonance and brutality.

CAST: (There is a hushed murmur throughout the crowd.)

FIRST CAPTAIN: How do things look now, Samson? (No answer) Is it as dark as ordinary night, or darker? (No answer.)

SECOND CAPTAIN: We cut your eyes out,

Not y ur tongue!

Speak up when spoken to! (Still no answer.)

FIRST CAPTAIN: Speak now, for you will grind long silences away

When you are prisoned in the prison house at Gaza.

SECOND CAPTAIN: Come, are you turned to stone?

Speak up! Speech! Speech!

CAST: (The crowd takes up the mocking cry of "Speech!" The derisive clamor grows in volume until cross-faded with:)

Music: Prison motif, a drab and dreary passage, holding all the way under?

SAMSON: The grave's a jolly place b side this prison--

Crowded and festive.

Here I am double-barred with darkness:

Eyeless and windowless and blind twice over.

And alone.

Alone save for the unbid voices....

DELILAH (whispers leeringly).

Dear, mighty man. So unafraid to stand alone....

SAMSON. Yet night is talented in many phosphorescent ways:

I am instructed in the alphabet of pain;

I know the color of privation,

The hangdog droop of hopelessness.

DELILAH. My poor beleaguered boy....

SAMSON. I am brother to the withered and the halt.

I, the mighty Samson, shaven and betrayed,

Spat on, my eyes burnt out;

Walled up; mocked by vile songs and sayings;

Audience to the abominable memory

Of sweet and venomous Delilah.

DELILAH. Sleep, sleep, my hero, sleep.

SAMSON (shouting angrily).

Go, woman!

Vanish from my vanished sight!

Sink down among the rubble of my life.

DELILAH. The Philistines are on you, Samson!

SAMSON. May maggots eat your nagging voice

Note by note!

DELILAH. My poor beleaguered boy....

SAMSON (with exasperation).

Aagh...why do I fence with ghosts?

Why listen to this shadow-talk?

I will take up all kinds of matters with myself:

Talk of the weather

Though I be entombed away from winds

and rains and all the lights of heaven;

Say good mornings to myself

Though morning is a customin a foreign earth;

Count numbers

Though all days are one to me and there are only

ciphers after that;

Speak of the future

Though the future never speak of me;

Argue with---

Sound of a saucer being scraped across the floor.

SAMSON. Ah! Food !

The saucer slipped beneath the door.

The bread and water for the growing hair.

Now I must feel for it,

Crawling, like an old dog who's outlived his eyes.

Aha, here is the platter. But where's the bread?

Fah! What is this reeking meat?

A fish-tail!

That means the festival of Dagon has begun:

Philistia's thanksgiving to its fish-tail god,

Within whose profane season

Captive heathens to their cult are fed on scraps

of ritual.

Yes, eyeless Samson, stooped and chained and nibbling fish

ends, will be summoned to make sport before

the sacrificial feast is through.

I, who brought them grief in battle,

Will now bring them laughter,

Stumbling like a clown upon the shrine of Dagon.

MUSIC: The prison motif segues to a gay and pagan tune. Above it:

CAST. (Noises of a crowd in the intermediate distance; a holiday mood.

They are happy over Dagon's deliverance of Samson into the hands of